

सामूहिक पहल

# Samuhik Pahal

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Apply for Wipro Foundation Seeding Program 2020 | Last date: October 30, 2020 | [Apply Here](#) (pg 15).



# Gendered impact of COVID-19

Interactions between girls from KGBV schools and our field coordinators revealed the commonalities of their daily life struggles.

By Ananya, Arzoo, Suganya, and Vaibhav from SwaTaleem Foundation

**M**ewat, also known as Nuh, is located 40 km from Gurgaon and is one of the most backward districts in Haryana. There is little inclination toward formal education, and girls' education is a low priority for most families. Girls rarely get the chance to pursue higher secondary and college education. As an organization, our work is primarily with girls and teachers of Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalyas (KGBVs). These schools are residential elementary schools established under Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, in blocks across the country designated as educationally backward. Most of the girls are first-generation school goers.

Our Field Coordinators (FCs) are young women in their early twenties, born and brought up in Mewat, who have completed their Diploma in Education from Teacher Training Institutes. Their role involves daily interactions with KGBV students. They have the potential to influence attitudes around education with their presence among girls who are growing up with dreams and aspirations.

While reflecting on her own school experiences, one of our FCs recalled:

"When we were in school, our teachers would often pass comments that we are in school only to escape household chores and not necessarily to learn. The boys would also mock us for being in schools, saying that they would never send their sisters to school. This wouldn't make us feel good about ourselves and did not give us the interest to put in more of our effort. But when few teachers shared

**The societal expectations faced by our FCs (Aiza and Sahina) give us insights into the lives and challenges of our KGBV students.**

that we are good at multitasking and can also study or work while managing the house too, we would feel good."

The societal expectations faced by our FCs (Aiza and Sahina) give us insights into the lives and challenges of our KGBV students. Seeing the FC riding a scooter into



SwaTaleem volunteers and Drama and Movement Therapy facilitator conduct a session for Girls at KGBV Nuh.

the premises of a KGBV on a cold, yet sunny morning, the very thought of her being there and accessible, gives the students hope of a different and better future.

The onboarding of our FCs began on March 1. As part of their induction, Perspective on Gender, English as a Second Language, and Teaching Practices were to be covered. With the onset of lockdown on March 19, our induction plans as well as education of the KGBV girls were disrupted. We began sending small write-ups, comprehension passages, and stories for the FCs. They would read the stories, respond to certain prompts, click photos, and send them back via WhatsApp. However, being at home creates the inherent expectation that they contribute to household chores, and the only time they could find for studying was either in the afternoon or late at night. In the first 2-3 months of schools being shut, there was no access to the latest contact details of the students. In one of the exercises, we asked FCs to conduct small focus group discussions (FGDs) with girls from Standard 6 to 9 on how the lockdown has been affecting them. Excerpts of interviews are quoted below:

**जब से कोरोना से स्कूल बंद हुआ है, घर पर कैसा महसूस हो रहा है ?**

जब से कोरोना लगा हुआ है हमें घर पर घुटन सी महसूस होती है और हमारा जी घबराया सा होता है, जैसे कि हम बहुत ही बड़े संकट में आ गए हैं और इससे कोई बचाव नहीं हो

**उन्हें स्कूल ना जाने की खुशी है या दुख या कोई फर्क नहीं पड़ता ?**

हमें स्कूल ना जाने का बहुत दुख हो रहा है क्योंकि हमारी जिंदगी का सवाल है। हमें स्कूल जाने से शिक्षा मिलती है और हमारी सारी पढ़ाई बेकार हो रही है। जो सिलेबस हमें पढ़ाया गया है, हम उनको भी भूल रहे हैं। हमारी शिक्षा बहुत ही कमजोर हो रही है और साथ में हमारा खेलना-कूदना भी खत्म होता जा रहा है।

**स्कूल की किस बात को वो सबसे ज्यादा याद करती है ?**

स्कूल में जाकर हमें अपनी सहेलियों से हंसकर सलाम करना और उनके साथ खेलना व बैठना बहुत याद आता है

**घर पर उनका काम बढ़ गया है या घट गया ?**

घर पर हमारे लिए काम बहुत बढ़ गया है क्योंकि घर वाले कहते हैं कि आप स्कूल नहीं जाती हो तो आप खेत में जाओ या कोई और काम करने के लिए कह देते हैं।

**क्या उनको घर पर पढ़ने लिए समय मिल पाता है कब और उस समय में वह कैसे पढ़ पाती हैं ?**

घर पर समय बहुत मुश्किल से मिल पाता है अगर मिल भी पता है तो शाम को जब बिस्तर पर आराम करने का टाइम होता है उस टाइम सारे काम से फारिग हो जाते हैं अकेले कमरे में जाकर पढ़ाई करने लग जाते हैं।

One can see the parallels between the challenges faced by FCs and KGBV girls. As women, FCs are expected to look after their families, finish home chores, look after children, and then find time to work to fulfill their aspirations. Girls at KGBVs are expected to work in the fields and finish household chores. Learning from the FGD, the necessity of a safe space for girls, away from

gendered expectations, is an essential prerequisite for education that cannot be emphasized enough.

Access to digital technology is also gendered and has similar parallels here. One of our FCs is married and can only access WhatsApp or the Internet and attend classes through her partner's phone. When he is not at home, she has to wait for him to return before she is able to join a call. Similarly, our girls in KGBVs, in a family of six, would be the last ones to get access to the phone when their father has returned from work and after her brothers have used it. As a group, we realized how the patriarchal power dynamics drive access to spaces and resources. We also realized that the patriarchal system constructs the narrative of an 'ideal woman/girl' and links it with the honor of the family, which not only restricts their mobility in the physical world but also in the digital world. For example, adolescent girls occupying digital spaces scares some parents because they fear their girls may elope or 'have affairs', and, thereby tarnish the family's honor.

**Access to digital technology is also gendered and has similar parallels here. One of our FCs is married and can only access WhatsApp or the Internet and attend classes through her partner's phone.**

Our FCs are resisting existing structures in their own small ways to gain access to resources. One of them has negotiated with her father and brother to give her a phone and sim card. The rest feel happy and empowered to be able to send emails and WhatsApp voice recordings of their 'Read Aloud' practice. Most of their learning is driven by linking their personal experiences to the work they are doing. As summarized by one of the FCs, 'We feel different here, and we are learning in a way very different from that in our college or school. It is a strange new experience.'

We are still making efforts to get connected to our girls through low-tech mediums like IVRS and community radio, mainly focusing on keeping them engaged and connected, encouraging them to learn from their surroundings, and not pressurizing them with the expectation of 'learning outcomes.' COVID-19 has hit everyone, and the gendered implication of it is visible in the lives of our FCs and girls at KGBVs, where access to resources and continuing their education is a challenge.

*You can reach out to SwaTaleem at [vaibhav@swataleem.org](mailto:vaibhav@swataleem.org)*



# Enabling positive childcare for younger children

Crises often help to bring about behavioral changes that are difficult to make in normal times.

By Shubhra Chatterjee from Vikramshila



Parents engaging children in a learning activity using household items. Photo by Vikramshila

As with every other crisis or disaster, the burden of the COVID-19 pandemic has inevitably fallen on the shoulders of the weakest, poorest, and most vulnerable sections of society, children being one of them. The prevailing uncertainty and hopelessness born out of livelihood losses, income depletion, hunger, poverty, fear of the disease have made it very stressful for millions of parents. They often tend to overlook the fact that the signs of naughtiness, obstinacy, disruptive behavior, and tantrums of children are but manifestations of their inner trauma and stress. Young children do not have the vocabulary to communicate their feelings, and parents lack the wherewithal to handle such situations and often resort to scolding and punishment, which only aggravates the situation. We were worried that prolonged toxic stress in young children could negatively

affect their brain development. It is this aspect that made us think of doing something with parents and children during the lockdown.

Our Home learning package for 3 to 6-year-olds was intended to create a conducive environment at home with activities that relatively poorly educated parents could also do with their children. The activities did not require much in terms of material objects: just a bit of imagination and rebuilding on childhood games, local games, most of which have the elements of demonstration, repetition, chorus, a set of rules; bringing in an element of a couplet, a rhyme or a catchy jingle such as *Baba Baba Kiski Chaal*. Our fieldworker shared a video of a father and his 4-year-old daughter doing this simple activity around animal movements in a busy slum, undeterred by all the things going around them. It was a delight to see the joy



Children engaged in a learning activity. Photo by Vikramshila

and the sense of importance the child placed on the activity at hand. When her father forgot to follow the set 'rules' of the activity, the child kept reminding him! Her energy, concentration, and all-out attention on the activity, irrespective of passers-by, the narrow space, the wet lane – nothing took her focus away from the activity. In placing their minds solely on this 5- minute activity, the child and her father seemed to have developed a great bond. There was much laughter and smiles all around as the child learned about animals and their walk along with their calls that they did together. A rich vocabulary was generated along with a number of skills aligned to the physical domain, language domain, psycho-social and cognitive domains.

The feedback from parents tells us that even those parents who were initially hesitant to take these up as they felt inadequate because of their low literacy levels, were doing them well. At some point, they had experienced an 'aha' moment as they suddenly gained confidence in themselves and started making small innovations in the games. Some reported that these activities were helping them to de-stress and had brought about a visible change in the otherwise gloomy atmosphere. "I felt I had got back my childhood," – one of them said. It made them feel more capable and competent. Research shows that with the right inputs of content and techniques, parent groups are more likely to feel better about themselves and their parenting abilities, and in turn, interact with their children in responsive and supportive ways enhancing the development of their children. It is universally accepted that the parent-child dyad and a positive home environment are the foundation of a child's well-being and development. For quite some time, we were in fact, struggling to establish

this linkage, and the lockdown provided us with the right kind of opportunity. Going forward, we feel it is important to keep this kind of initiative alive as there may be disruption of several normal activities even after the formal re-opening of schools. Crisis situations often help to bring about behavioral changes that are difficult to make in normal times. Now that we have some evidence of enhanced confidence levels of parents in looking after the overall developmental needs of children, I feel it is important to pursue the thread, as that would pave the way for achieving optimal development outcomes for children.

You can reach out to Vikramshila Education Resource Society at [info@vikramshila.org](mailto:info@vikramshila.org)

Blog: [www.vikramshilaspeaks.blogspot.com](http://www.vikramshilaspeaks.blogspot.com)



# The Home-based learning package

Learning package designed keeping in mind the convenience of parents.

By Team Vikramshila

**D**uring the lockdown, we designed a home learning package for 3 to 6-year-old children. The package consists of a pictorial calendar and audio clips of instructions on how to conduct the activities with children, along with some songs and rhymes. The daily calendar has a simple routine, with three activities per day, which should not take up more than 25 to 30 minutes. The activities are exemplary of how parents should spend quality time with their children. While designing the package, we were very conscious of the current context and ensured that it was not a burden on parents. Though the activities are based on pedagogically appropriate early childhood learning principles focusing on all domains of development, they are the kind that can be done with simple household objects.

**This home-based learning package is now being successfully implemented in three states, and has reached out to more than 12 lakh children.**

The central message of the package is: look around and learn because learning is everywhere! Care was also taken to select such activities that parents with low literacy levels could also do them easily. Repetition is built into the calendar design to avoid overload of information or resources. The activities given have a range and covers 3 to 6 years, the easier activities for younger children and slightly difficult activities for older children.

Another important feature of the package is to involve all family members because the responsibility of child care does not rest on the mother alone. The pictorial calendar gives them clues to include fathers, grandparents, and older siblings. The package is disseminated every week along with audio clips giving instructions about how to conduct the activities, stories, and rhymes. Our field team along with the Anganwadi workers, help in disseminating them to the parents. Multiple modes of transfer are used – sharing through whatsapp, through blue tooth, and directly through home visits in case of families who do not have access to any devices. Photocopies of the calendar is also distributed in some places during dry ration distribution days. Feedback is collected regularly to seek the response of parents. This home-based learning package is now being successfully implemented in three states, and has reached out to more than 12 lakh children.

You can reach out to Vikramshila Education Resource Society at [info@vikramshila.org](mailto:info@vikramshila.org)



A snapshot of the activity calendar by Vikramshila.

## Resources:

To access other resources shared by Wipro's partners for the network, visit: <https://sites.google.com/view/covid19collectiveaction/home>

To contribute ideas, resources, articles, or to share your stories for future issues, send us an email on [foundation.communications@wipro.com](mailto:foundation.communications@wipro.com).

# Making space for mathematical thinking

## Learning mathematics by reflecting on concrete experiences.

By Usha Menon from Jodogyan

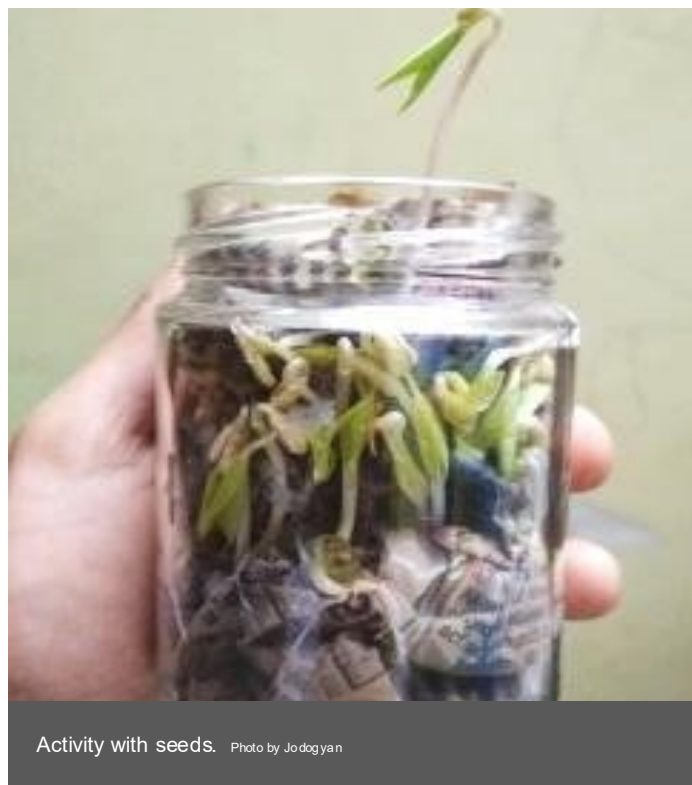
**M**any people are afraid of mathematics. We usually have an image of mathematics as something very abstract, full of rules and symbols to be learned. Learning this was difficult even when one was in a face-to-face, in-person classroom. Now with online classes, it would be even more dreary and challenging. True, if we accept that image of mathematics.

Mathematics is abstract, and its processes can be understood in terms of rules, and it does use symbols to make its job easier. But mathematics did not begin that way. It came from our lives, from the many puzzles we faced in real-life situations, from the need to do and make things. At school, we saw mathematics as a ready-made thing, and things went too fast. We could not make connections, and we developed a fear of mathematics. If we conduct online classes with the same image of mathematics, as something abstract that needs to be explained, then things would indeed become even more difficult.

But there is also the possibility of looking at mathematics as something which emerges from reflecting on very concrete experiences. This has always been true, but the need is urgent now.

**Mathematics is abstract, and its processes can be understood in terms of rules, and it does use symbols to make its job easier. But mathematics did not begin that way. It came from our lives, from the many puzzles we faced in real-life situations, from the need to do and make things.**

The processes during online classes can be broadly divided into three parts; online communication, offline activities, and also what we can call as home-engagement. Offline activities are those that are short-term and are directly connected to online communication. For example, it might involve finding how many footsteps are there from one end of the room to the other and comparing it with what the other children had found. The online communication is usually paused during offline activity and then continued. But a home engagement is something in which the child gets fully absorbed, although the results would be shared during the period of online communication. It can involve sprouting seeds and the many investigations related to it or making a weighing balance and making investigations with it. Keeping these



Activity with seeds. Photo by Jodogyan

three segments of online classes in mind we can consider whether we can engage with children also in the area of mathematics in a meaningful way.

We often see that children do not have a good basic number sense even when they reach middle school. Most children are not able to mentally add or find the difference between numbers up to 100. Various interesting counting activities can be done to strengthen their basic number sense. Counting objects and measurement are two foundational activities that can lay a good basis for mathematics – provided they involve strong engagement by children. We share here with you some activities that we found engaging for children.

### Seeds and Estimation

The activity is rooted in a home engagement involving sprouting dal or peas according to the context. As a prelude to this a handful of chana is taken, soaked, and some transferred to a bottle for observation and the rest to a pot or ground. Taking care of a plant and observing it is a very important educational experience for a child. Children in our urban *bastis* do not get this opportunity.

Connected to this, children are asked about how many seeds they think will come in their closed fist (with no seed visible). Children estimate, count, and share their observations with their friends during online



communication. There would be many discussions during this process (provided connectivity is reasonable). Depending on the age of children and the nature of connectivity, the discussion could go further to include a comparison between an estimate and actual number and the difference between estimate and actual.

This activity can be done at home among the family members also. Young children might find it difficult to make a table to show their findings. And sometimes they can be innovative to share their findings with their friends.

**There are many suitable materials available in all neighborhoods, whether in the kitchen or outside. The approach can be to first orient the children with a few activities and then plan further activities to build up ideas.**

This activity also provides a good opportunity to connect with parents. Even in urban areas, many parents have the knowledge about sprouting and growing plants, which can get connected to this activity.

Discussion about making a consolidated table can be challenging for teachers to communicate when connectivity is unstable, and there is not sufficient data. Combining Whatsapp and conference calls then becomes one possible solution. In this case, the teacher might share a picture through Whatsapp, which children can look at, and then they can discuss the picture through normal call-in conference mode. This could, for example, be a table which gives the amount of chana that each child could hold within a closed fist; data that children had shared earlier and consolidated now by the teacher. Children can see at one go and make comparisons and also discuss – are the differences only because of the size of the fist; can it be that the size of the *chana* is also different?

A very good follow-up activity is to see whether anyone can take as much chana/moong as one had estimated.

In all these activities there is a lot of counting one by one and comparative evaluations being made, which form the basis for developing a good number sense. The need to maintain a table emerges naturally in this activity. In this case, not only basic number sense but also many other educationally important attitudes get built.

### Counting and Patterns

We begin with free-play before children start with more mathematically oriented activities. Depending upon the environment, an enjoyable activity is making figures using leaves. Adults also enjoy, as shown in the figures below, made by some volunteers in one of Jodo Gyan projects.

After some time, a condition can be put on the activity; how many different figures can you make using a total of 10. It could be leaves and seeds or any other two types of objects.

Children make patterns and soon realize that there is a limit; they start considering the number of ways the number



10 can be split. This activity can continue with 11, 12, and so on.

If the communication is good, children can be supported to see the pattern and observe that the number changes depending upon whether it is an even or odd number. Even otherwise, the repeated thinking and counting processes help to deepen the number sense, including the ability to see numbers additively. The ability to split 10 becomes a necessary prelude to doing addition and subtraction mentally. In situations where there is no connectivity at all, week-based (once or twice) visits could also support children.

There are many suitable materials available in all neighborhoods, whether in the kitchen or outside. The approach can be to first orient the children with a few activities and then plan further activities to build up ideas. When building up the activities there has to be some rough idea about the leading questions at each stage. These are then modified according to the responses of children. Sometimes completely unexpected possibilities also emerge.

Children miss the organic connection with other children they had during school times. Home engagement, along with online communication, can reduce the impact of these days of forced isolation to some extent.

You can reach out to Jodo Gyan on [jodogyangov@gmail.com](mailto:jodogyangov@gmail.com)

# State of women in pandemic

Financial stress, excessive housework, and childcare is weighing down on women.



A typical day for a woman in Assam's Majuli district starts at 3.30 a.m. She gets up, cooks breakfast and lunch, and then goes to the field. The day ends with brewing rice wine around which lies the spirit of community and sharing in the Mising Tribe. A majority of tribes in Majuli grow mustard, black gram, and sugarcane. Until COVID-19 struck us, these cash crops supplemented their income, which is the only source of income for many households.

Located on an island on the mighty Brahmaputra, the lockdown was not the only challenge that people in Majuli had to face. The recent flooding and loss of livestock due to African swine flu have added to their woes. With income sources drying up in this agricultural community, women have no choice but to work harder.

Dharamjeet from Ayang says, "We have come across so many cases where women just broke down while talking about their problems. Men in these communities have not been able to find jobs. The situation in families is stressful. We have also come across a few cases of domestic violence. There is no doubt that women are bearing the

brunt of the current situation."

Ayang Trust is working towards transforming marginalized communities of North East India by creating equal opportunities through education, livelihood, and healthcare. Ayang also runs The Hummingbird School along with a hostel for students from class LKG to class 6. The school and the hostel were shut down after the lockdown was announced. The organization is now concerned about whether their students will return. Many older students have started supporting their families as they need more hands-on-deck for survival.

Aswathy from Ayang says, "We had called our teachers for a door to door visit to see what is happening in the community while maintaining all social distancing protocols. The teachers have told us that the children were in a lot of emotional distress. There were a lot of children who were suddenly very distant and disconnected emotionally - a lot of them seemed hopeless."

The Ayang team has been distributing booklets with a social-emotional learning component to it on a pilot basis



Women in Gajera Chapoli, Majuli. Photo by Ayang Trust





since August. The booklets focus on how one should process feelings and emotions – it's a way for the team to keep in touch with the children and to keep children in contact with learning.

Ayang Trust has reached out to over 2500 families facing a crisis from COVID-19 and flood and has distributed relief packets, which include sanitation and hygiene essentials along with food items.

For women working in tea gardens in Alipurduar (West Bengal), the situation is beginning to get worrisome. The children demand food multiple times a day. There is no money to buy recharge for online education or sanitary pads. The cost of vegetables in the region has increased so much that it is unaffordable for most.

On an average, women in tea gardens earn INR 175 per day. But since the lockdown, the tea gardens have been operating in low capacity – 2-3 days at the most. Less work means less money, but women also have the additional burden of taking care of family members who have returned home from urban cities.

**Many girls have been married off during the lockdown, and no one knows if the girls have consented to the marriage – it's cheaper to organize a marriage during the lockdown as only a few guests visit.**

- Shabina  
Vanangana

Mamina from Rural Aid says, "The financial and care burden on women is tremendous. Earlier, children used to get midday meals in school, but now they have to provision for more food. Young girls cannot buy sanitary pads. Men are at home, and there are more mouths to feed. Many women are depressed or are getting angry because of the situation. There is a need for psychological counseling."

Rural Aid reaches out to more than 2000 women in Alipurduar's tea estates. As part of COVID-19 relief, the organization has been working on spreading awareness and helping vulnerable women by connecting them to government schemes at the panchayat and block level.

There have also been instances of early marriages in the region, and it seems that parents are seeing a benefit in getting the girls married during the pandemic.

"Early marriage is common here. There are also cases where girls and boys elope. But this time, it is different. In a pandemic, marriages can happen with only a few guests, and this saves parents huge expenses. It is surprising because families here are generally very particular about auspicious and inauspicious dates, but it doesn't look like that matters anymore," adds Mamina.

With more dependents in each family and expenses mounting, the fear of trafficking women from the region is also relatively high. Organizations like Rural Aid are running several awareness programmes on this as traffickers are likely to take advantage of vulnerable women once train services resume.

Meanwhile, cases of domestic violence and sexual abuse have seen a sharp rise in Uttar Pradesh (UP), according to Vanangana, a women's rights collective. Access to a fair trial and healthcare services has been a challenge throughout the lockdown.

Shabina from Vanangana says, "Recently we helped a girl who was raped. The girl is from a vulnerable community. Since the majority of the hospitals were busy with COVID-19 patients, we were sent to a hospital in another district. When we reached there, we found that they had not received the FIR copy from the police station. It took us three days to get her medical done. The family was also pressurized to book a private vehicle for her medical. Can a low-income family afford all this?"

Vanangana has been creating videos and voice messages to promote more awareness of domestic violence in the region. The team creates and shares videos over WhatsApp. The message in the communication is simple – if any woman is facing violence or domestic abuse, she must reach out to their teams. When the Vanangana team receives calls or messages for help, they rush to the spot.

"We have received many phone calls related to domestic violence cases. Sometimes we have to travel far to help these women. It's a risk too because it is not possible to maintain social distancing," adds Shabina.

Vanangana has been working closely with the judicial system and helping women from marginalized communities in Bundelkhand and Chitrakoot regions in getting access to justice and equal opportunities.

With the relaxation of the lockdown, women are being encouraged to come out of their houses, but finding work is not easy.

Shabina says, "Because of prevalent discrimination against people from the lower caste, they cannot even open a chai shop as no one will buy from them. And many women don't have any identity proof, which makes it difficult for them to take benefits of government schemes. We are concerned because these women are living by themselves and also have legal expenses."

The lockdown is having an unfortunate outcome for adolescent girls, many of whom are first-generation school-goers. Girls who had enrolled for their educational programmes at Vanangana centres have asked for exemption as they have found work as daily wagers. Given the situation, supporting their families earning INR 100-150 per day is more important.

"Many girls have been married off during the lockdown, and no one knows if the girls have consented to the marriage – it's cheaper to organize a marriage during the lockdown as only a few guests visit," adds Shabina.

For women in the Bangalore-based Action, Service, and Hope for AIDS (ASHA) Foundation that works with HIV affected and infected women, the lockdown has been daunting. HIV infected women are HIV+, whereas HIV affected women are those who had or have a partner who is HIV+.

Dr. Glory from ASHA Foundation says, "At least 30 HIV positive women who are widows, and who were working as housemaids earning between 4000 to 6000 every month, have lost their jobs. The house owners are worried that they may get COVID-19 from the maids, and maids are worried that they will get it from the owners of the house."

HIV positive people need to take ART (Anti-Retroviral Treatment) lifelong and with more than 95% adherence. This helps to make the viral load undetectable and brings up the CD4 counts. If such people who are doing well on ART get infected with COVID-19 they will respond as normal healthy people do. However, if they are not on ART and CD4 counts are low, then they can have serious complications with COVID-19 infection.

**It was a challenge at first to arrange medicines for HIV+ women during the lockdown because they could not travel to our office. Owing to the prevalent discrimination, the women were hesitant to give addresses to have the medicines home-delivered – they didn't want the community to know that they are HIV+**

- Dr. Glory  
ASHA Foundation

Dr. Glory says, "It was a challenge at first to arrange medicines for HIV+ women during the lockdown because they could not travel to our office. Owing to the prevalent discrimination, the women were hesitant to give addresses to have the medicines home-delivered – they didn't want the community to know that they are HIV+."

ASHA Foundation was established in 1998 by Dr. Glory Alexander and like-minded people. Over the years, ASHA has made vast strides in advocacy, capacity building, research, preventive services, awareness, treatment, care, support, and rehabilitation of HIV affected and infected persons with a particular focus on women and children.

One of the consequences of the lockdown is that ASHA Foundation will not be able to hold its annual camp for HIV+ children. Every year more than 100 children – most of them orphans – join the residential programme that



Self help group at ASHA Foundation.

Photo by ASHA Foundation

allows them to work on their self-esteem, confidence, and understand the importance of adherence to medicines. The lockdown has also put on hold their adolescent health education programme that reaches out to over 50000 children in semi-urban and rural areas that focuses on issues like friendships – real and virtual, love, infatuation, marriage, companionship, fidelity, pregnancy, smoking, and drug abuse.

The situation is different for women in Cuddalore, located on the coast of rural Tamil Nadu. Here, women groups – a Self Help Group (SHG) and a group of teachers – have found work, but are still facing resistance from families.

Nisha from Kanavu says, "The SHG group we work with makes items like bags, laptop sleeves, and during the lockdown, we also started making masks so that women can continue to have a source of income. But they have been facing resistance from their families mainly because children and other family members are also at home, and women are seen as primary caregivers."

After the lockdown was announced, Kanavu had shut its production unit for a few days. Later, they found an opportunity to stitch masks with support from a partner organization.

Kanavu works on nurturing leadership in disadvantaged schools and communities in addition to developing teachers' skills in content and pedagogy through termly training programs and regular workshops. Incidentally, the teachers that Kanavu is working with have been facing resistance from family members since they got access to a smartphone.

Nisha says, "One and half months into the lockdown, we figured that we should have a medium-term solution so that children do not lose out on their education. Urban children can access education through online platforms, and that inspired us to think if we can replicate that for children that we work with."

Through a survey done at the time of COVID-19 relief distribution, Kanavu found that 700 out of the 1500





A teacher training session in progress at Kanavu Trust. Photo by Kanavu Trust

families don't have a smartphone. Kanavu started fundraising for smartphones for these families and the teachers.

**Maybe families fear that women will go out of their control, access unnecessary information, or presume that they maybe talking to someone. The notion that the more you learn, the less you want to respect us could be one reason for their reaction**

- Nisha  
Kanavu

Around 60 teachers from five Affordable Private Schools in the region are working with Kanavu to provide online classes. On an average, they spend 6-7 hours on the smartphone to share and receive updates from students.

Nisha says, "Maybe families fear that women will go out of their control, access unnecessary information, or presume that they maybe talking to someone. The notion that the more you learn, the less you want to respect us could be one reason for their reaction."

Despite facing opposition, the teachers have been successful in reaching out to around 700 students through their newfound access to smartphones.

"Our teachers used to meet at least once a month, share their learnings and challenges on personal leadership or pedagogy – it's a space that makes them feel empowered.

After the lockdown, we are doing the same through the online medium, but of course, nothing can replace in-person meetings," adds Nisha.

Support for women's groups by the government is focused on public health responses. But the gendered impacts of the pandemic in other areas be it employment or other types of social security is less visible on the ground. While many NGOs were able to develop mechanisms to help close these gaps, social distancing norms have limited their ability to work efficiently. Unfortunately, the situation of adolescent girls from marginalized communities could deteriorate further. As livelihood takes priority, adolescent girls and boys may not resume education and could become victims of early marriage – resuming school seems difficult for now.

*You can reach out to:*

Rural Aid on [ruralaid03@rediffmail.com](mailto:ruralaid03@rediffmail.com)

Ayang Trust on [ayangtrust@gmail.com](mailto:ayangtrust@gmail.com)

ASHA Foundation on [ashafblr@yahoo.co.in](mailto:ashafblr@yahoo.co.in)

Kanavu on [info@kanavu.in](mailto:info@kanavu.in)

Vanangana on [vanangana.chitrakoot@gmail.com](mailto:vanangana.chitrakoot@gmail.com)

# Serving COVID-affected communities

*Bhaktivedanta Hospital & Research Institute gave a rapid response in times of crisis in urban and rural areas of Thane.*



**B**haktivedanta Hospital & Research Institute is a 200-bed multi-specialty NABH- accredited non-profit hospital committed to integrated, holistic healthcare practice, community service, education, and research in rural and tribal areas. The Mira-Bhayandar-based hospital has done commendable work in providing healthcare services for people from vulnerable communities during the pandemic on their own and in partnership with the government.

Dr. Ajay from Bhaktivedanta Hospital says, "Like all other parts of the world, there was great confusion prevailing in Mira Bhayander, a region with a population of 1.2 million. The health care institutions were in a fix since the staff could not commute. We had two options – wait and watch, or take proactive steps within the given constraints. We approached the Municipal Commissioner and took proactive steps to take the COVID-19 pandemic head-on."

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Bhaktivedanta Hospital

Within two weeks, a team from Bhaktivedanta hospital converted the Bharat Ratna Pandit Bhimsen Joshi Municipal Hospital in Mira Bhayandar into a dedicated COVID facility comprising 20 ICU beds and 100 regular beds with 40+ staff and doctors taking care of protocols and training. Since March 2020, more than 3000+ patients have been treated for COVID-19, and except for patients with comorbidity, all others have recovered.

Dr. K. Venkataramanan says, "Mira-Bhayandar became a red zone, and COVID-19 cases started shooting up. We were left with no option but to activate our satellite center at PV Doshi Hospital. We needed ventilators, ECG machines, RT-PCR machines, Automated/ Semi-automated beds, Medical Supplies



Medical staff training. Photo by Bhaktivedanta Hospital

including PPE Kits, N95 Masks, Hand Sanitizers, etc. In partnership with Wipro Foundation, we were able to set up a dedicated COVID-19 hospital."

In over six weeks, the team also came up with their COVID-19 testing facility – the first laboratory in Mira Bhayander and Northern Coastal districts of Maharashtra having NABL Accreditation and ICMR Approval for RT-PCR COVID-19 testing. Contributing to the ongoing search for COVID-19 treatment, the hospital has set up structured research on *Panchagavya* medicine in search of a cost-effective solution for preventive care.

Other than enabling COVID-19 care in partnership with the government, the hospital has performed a total of 568 emergency surgeries, 203 emergency CathLab procedures for the heart, 65 normal deliveries and 73 Caesarian Section deliveries, and 15 fracture-surgeries from March to May 2020.

A dedicated team at Bhaktivedanta continues to provide:

- Training and education to the doctors and nurses, while coordinating with various agencies
- Post-traumatic Stress Disorder Medical counselling
- Healthcare to the rural and tribal population through satellite centers
- Doctors at door-steps through our mobile clinics

*You can reach out to Bhaktivedanta Hospital on [care@bhaktivedantahospital.com](mailto:care@bhaktivedantahospital.com)*



**Apply Now!**

## Seeding Fellowship Program 2020

**Last date: October 31, 2020**

Wipro Foundation offers a Seeding Fellowship of up to 3-years, to individuals or groups committed to improving educational quality in rural or urban India. Under this program, fellows can work on improving the long-term effectiveness of their organization, get access to capacity building opportunities provided to Wipro Foundation's vast network of 140+ organizations, and remain focused on doing what they love to do.

### Program Support:

- Funding support for up to three founding members
- Freedom to choose educational domains and geography
- Capacity building on emergent needs by education experts and resource organizations such as Digantar, Vikramshila, Azim Premji University, Jodo Gyan, etc
- Mentoring on organizational development issues
- Networking and learning from young and experienced Wipro Foundation partners

### We encourage expressions of interest from applicants who have:

- An intention to work with the public education system
- At least two years of experience working in the education sector and/ or have had academic exposure in education (e.g. B.El.Ed., M.A. Education, B.Ed, M.Ed.)
- A long-term commitment to a particular geography, preferably in locations currently underserved by education-focused Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)
- Been working with, or propose to work directly with children/teachers; preferably in the government education system
- An openness to learning



*"Wipro Foundation's fellowship program has been instrumental to our personal and organizational growth. The Foundation was very approachable and always encouraged innovation and a growth mind set. Fellowship processes equipped us with the perspective, knowledge, and know-how to make organizational decisions. Foundation's commitment to public education always inspired us. It has been an empowering journey."*

**- Anish, Co-founder, Art of Play Foundation**

### About Art of Play:

Anish, Hemant, and Kshitij co-founded Art of Play Foundation in 2016, intending to improve the quality of physical education available to students in government schools. They work towards this goal by working directly with students, designing and implementing teacher training, and partnering closely with the government and other education CSOs to share their philosophy, approach, and curricular materials, with as many schools as possible.

[Apply Here](#)[Or http://bit.ly/seedingprogram](http://bit.ly/seedingprogram)

**Grant Size: Rs 3.6 lacs each for up to three founders, for up to three years.**

Questions? Send us an email on [wipro.fellowship@gmail.com](mailto:wipro.fellowship@gmail.com)



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For more information, visit:  
<https://www.wipro.com/sustainability/>

Cover Photo:  
Livelihood discussion facilitated by Ayang Trust  
with the representatives of SHGs, panchayat  
members and other community  
organization

*Photo by Ayang Trust, Assam*

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